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DR. CHEYNE ON ISAIAH.

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In Dr. Cheyne's eleventh essay at the end of his commentary on Isaiah he sets forth the Cyrus-inscription in which the great king honors Bel, Nebo and Merodach, as thoroughly proving Isaiah (or "deutero-Isaiah") to be false. "We cannot," says Cheyne, "admit the accuracy of the inscription without detracting from the accuracy of the inspired prophet. This is no doubt painful to a reverent mind." I would suggest that probably a reverent mind would see if there is not a reasonable way of harmonizing the inscription and the prophet's statements.

Now what does Isaiah say of Cyrus? He says that God makes him his shepherd to lead Judah as a flock back to Palestine, after having raised him up and made him a conqueror. That is all that is said of Cyrus. It is all in Isa. 44:28-45:1-13.

There is not a word of his being a Zoroastrian, or his doing this work of restoring Israel through love of them. He is to do it without price or reward, which only shows that it is not part of a bargain. Cyrus may have treated Bel and Nebo and Merodach with the greatest courtesy, and yet have sent the Jews back as a wise piece of policy. God anointed many a bad man to do his will. He anointed Saul and he anointed Jehu. Why may not Cyrus also be his anointed, without insisting that therefore he must be represented as a godly man serving Jehovah? Cheyne assumes all this as the meaning of Isaiah, and then shows that he is contradicted by the inscription. It is really a going out of the way to have a thrust at the truth of the prophet. It is an argument for Cheyne's loose view of inspiration, which would utterly destroy confidence in an inspired man's utterances.

The bowing down of Bel and the stooping of Nebo, with the scattering of the idols, portrayed in ch. 46, are not spoken of by Isaiah as synchronous with Cyrus. The fulfillment of this phase of the prophecy by Darius, the ardent Zoroastrian, is plain enough. It was the Persian dynasty, inaugurated by Cyrus, which brought about the humiliation of Bel and Nebo; and it was Cyrus himself who, as a shepherd raised up of God, led Judah back to its fold.

So there is not the slightest discrepancy between Isaiah and the "inscription." The school of interpretation which draws such conclusions against the prophets from utterly insufficient material, needs watching.

Cheyne says: "Cyrus, on whom the prophet of Jehovah *lavishes* such honorable titles; Cyrus, who, the prophet even *appears to hope*, may be won over to the true faith, and become a conscious fellow-worker with God, is a polytheist and an idolater." This fling is wholly gratuitous. The words I have underscored express what is found only in Dr. Cheyne's imagination.

There is a painful absence of the "reverent mind" in the whole school to which Dr. Cheyne belongs, and yet learning without the reverent mind is incompetent to comment on that prophecy which came not in old time by the will of man, but which holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.